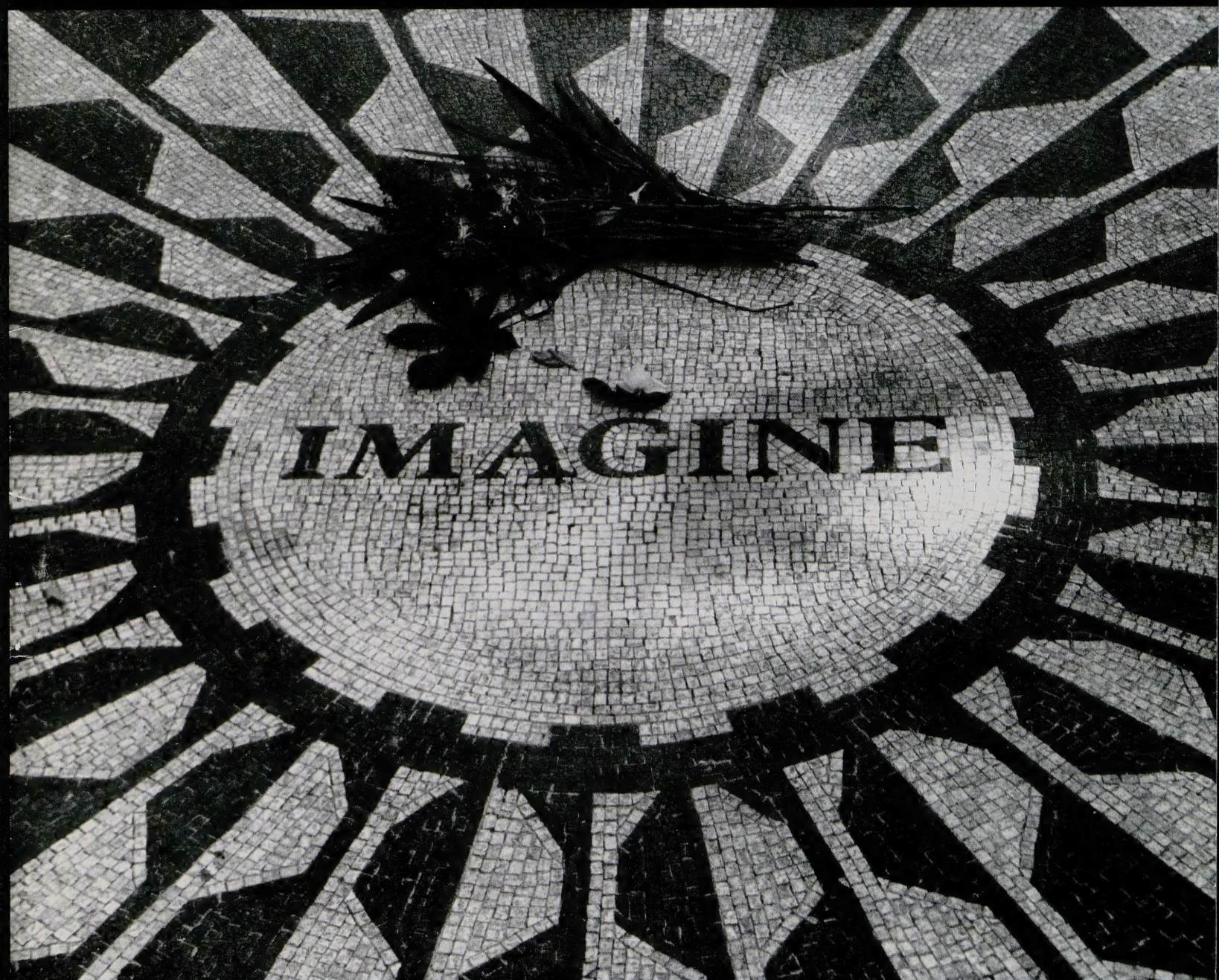


The Touchstone

Spring 1997



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Spring 1997



Waterfall by Robert Smith



Foreword

At the assembly line hidden in Heaven where children are made, after their little fingers and toes, eyes and a nose are placed in their proper spots, an angel comes and sprinkles freckle dust on each one. The result is this perfect little masterpiece which is sent to Earth with a special gift from God inside.

Sometimes God plants the gift barely beneath the surface. Those people discover their forte early in life. God challenges others and hides their gifts in secret places, only to be found with his guidance. Unfortunately, some will leave this world with their gifts undiscovered because they never stopped to seek directions.

The *Touchstone* is a celebration of those people who have not only found their gifts, but who also share them. Sometimes this guidance is all people need to find the gifts inside themselves. It may take time, but it helps to remember, like any good father, God never forgets his children. The gift is there—perhaps the eyes are not yet looking the right direction.

May God bless all still seeking their gifts,

Jamie Melton
Editor-in-chief

TJC Touchstone competes as a member of Texas Community College Press Association with community colleges and Texas Intercollegiate Press Association, universities and community colleges of similar enrollments, 7,500 to 50,000 students.

1996 TCCJA, first place for magazine overall excellence to Jamie Melton and staff and for non-photo illustration, "June Leaf" by Shelly Haines, third place, magazine cover design and non-journalism story, "Generosity" by Linda Honeycutt.

1995 10th Anniversary Issue, TIPA, second place photo by Kevin Ray Harris, third place for a single issue, overall excellence and short story by Teresa Lanier, TCCJA, third place overall excellence, honorable mention for best overall literary magazine.

1993 TIPA, second place for best overall literary magazine, first place for cover, second places for typography, layout and design by staff, feature photo and illustration; honorable mentions for single issue and illustration.

1992 "Passages," second in layout and design, fourth best overall literary magazine among Texas junior and senior colleges of similar enrollment, TIPA.

1991 "Carpe Diem"

1990 "Sunlight and Shadows," honorable mention, magazine sweepstakes and overall magazine excellence, TCCJA

1989 "Prospect and Retrospect," best overall, TIPA; honorable mention, magazine sweepstakes, TCCJA; second place, Columbia Scholastic Press Association, Columbia University, New York

1988 "Dreams and Nightmares," best magazine, Southwest Region, Community College Humanities Association, best overall, TIPA, third place, typography, layout and design, TJCCJA

1987 "Sunrise, Sunset," second place, overall literary magazine, TIPA, honorable mention, layout and design, TCCJA

1986 "Nostalgia and Now," first place, layout and design, TCCPA (now TCCJA) and TIPA

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About the title:

A distinctive streak left on a black touchstone when rubbed with genuine silver or gold was a foolproof test which allowed ancient civilizations to trust using coins for trade. We trust that you, too, will find genuine distinctive elements of value in the TJC Touchstone.

Carolyn Hendon



This edition of Touchstone
is printed on recycled paper.

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Writing Your Dinner

By Stacy Richardson

Sink your teeth into it.
Savor every curve, every arch, every serif.
While the letters drown your palate.

Don't swallow just yet,
Wait until your tongue is satisfied for just that second,
Then watch it beg for more.

Now, once more ...

Sink your teeth into each
And every, every vowel, every consonant
Until the whole word is devoured.

Let it settle deep in the pit of your heart
And feel the flurries as the swashes tickle your soul.
Then, kindly ask for seconds.

Fill your mind with literature
And allow it to satisfy your appetite.

Writing is tasty in its artistic form;
Calligraphy is the garnish for your meal.

Use these as an additive with other forms of nutrition,
For man cannot live on bread alone.

The Arts

By David Owen

Everyone wants to be
remembered,
Especially after they are
gone.
Some are remembered by
what they sculpt,
Others are remembered by a
song.

A potter is remembered by
what he makes,
With his own two bare
hands.
He molds and shapes a ball
of clay,
And the results turn out
grand.

The painter is remembered
by his colors,
As well as his shades and
tints.

A musician is remembered
by the music he composes,
Or how well he plays his
instrument.

But the poet is remembered
by what he writes,
Because it comes from deep
within.

It can easily be said that he
exposes himself,
Using nothing but paper
and a pen.

Little Girl

By Nikki McDowell

Little girl
Sitting in the dark
All alone
Cold and hungry.

Little girl
Watching as her
Drunken father
Beats her mother
Till blood stains the floor.

Little girl
Trying to escape
With eyes tightly closed.
As she shoots up smack.

Little girl
Slowly dying
Tears rolling down her cheeks
As she cries
For no one cares.

Little girl
Lonely no more
Crying no more
Lying in her grave
For she is dead.

Little girl
Sitting in the dark
All alone
Cold and hungry.

Sarah

By Christa Tompkins

Born in the morning with the promise of the
spring,
came Sarah who possesses joy to bring
to all the young girl meets in her time,
but especially to me because she is mine.

She follows and watches all my steps.
A proper example I must be,
as my daughter wants to be just like me.
The gift of her life touches my soul's very depths.

This precious gift from God to me
arrived suddenly and very unexpectedly.
Her birth adds joy to my existence.
From that moment on I knew I could travel the
distance.

Wind Beneath My Wings

By Michelle Chanslor

Did you ever know that you're my hero?
And everything I wish that I could be
And I can fly higher than an eagle
For you are the wind beneath my wings

Just listening to the words of this special song engulfs my eyes with tears as it reminds me of what my precious mother means to me. Nothing in this world could hold a candle to this remarkable woman. It would be impossible for me to find a single word to describe my mother. To me, her character is held in the highest regard, which in itself can describe all of her distinctive qualities.

Among my mother's many eminent qualities, the most distinctive of all is her essential quality of honesty. As far back as I can recall I cannot point out a dishonest day in her life. My mother is a person who is thought of with the highest respect by friends and loved ones because they can confide in her and know that her word is good. Honesty is a topic that comes up often in our household. There have been several occasions that I can recall my mother saying that she despises a liar. I have often heard her quote, "You may call me a lot of things, but you can never call me a liar."

Along with her honesty, my mother is the most generous person I know. As a wife and mother, she never fails to put her family's needs before her own. She is a person that gives of herself in many ways. Her patience is thick and her endurance is strong. Sometimes I wonder if she is taken for granted. She always sees that others' desires are fulfilled before her own. Generosity simply comes naturally to this unselfish woman.

The personal relationship that I have with my mother is a rather unique one. Like most mothers and daughters, we certainly have our ups and downs. She has always been my guiding light and my inspiration. I have her to thank for many of the changes throughout my

life. When I was a young girl, she was responsible for pulling me out of a difficult phase of my personality—shyness and self-consciousness. Through hard work and persistence, she taught me how to love myself for who I was. Each time I take a wrong turn down life's path, she is always there to steer me back in the right direction. There are a number of aspects that we do not see eye to eye on, yet I respect her strength in standing behind what she believes.

My mother's love for me through the years has been unconditional. Along with that love she has given me very valuable advice, the most valuable of which came from her inscription on my thirteenth birthday card. Now, five years later, I wish that I would have lived by those words. Even though I may not always express my love for her the way I should, she is still my one and only mother and I love and admire her from the depth of my heart and soul. Over the years, I have realized that she is not only my mother—she is also my very best friend!

My mother is a giant of a person in my eyes. As I said before, nothing can compare to her. She is a strong-willed and strong-minded individual that can endure almost any load, yet her heart is delicate and fragile. When she hurts, she hurts deeply, and when she weeps she is as fragile as a child. Like the song says, "She's a sparrow when she's broken, but she's an eagle when she flies." My personal opinion of my mother is a combination of love and admiration for all that she is. With an extraordinary person like this to love and care for me, I consider myself lucky and blessed by God to be able to call myself her daughter. She may not be aware of this, but I consider her "the wind beneath my wings!"



A Loving Mother by Marie Bays

Pit and Peak

By C. J. Cavanaugh

A pit and a peak on a plain of sand,
the sole life's work of a weary man.

In building his mountain up to the sky,
he forgot the pit for his sand nearby.

Yet grain for grain as his mountain grew,
the pit beside became deeper, too.

And now with his peak up all too high,
he lies just as low in his pit to die.

Had he but stopped at half the same,
climb-out could just have reached the plain.

As words of comfort some did say,
"A monument to you, a challenge for the day."

But time and climbers did shift the sand,
now pit and peak lie as level land.

No monument to show nor person to know,
the futile efforts of one so far, far below.

Winter Walk

By Joshua White

Scarlet leaves announce
Our quick shuffle, crackling,
Numb nose, finger, toes.



Leaves by Robert Smith

lose myself

By Jamie Melton

i watch the breeze push the limbs to and fro
and i lose myself ...

i look at the water as the waves flow
and i lose myself ...

i peer at the sky and watch the stars glow
and i lose myself ...

i look in the eyes of a newborn child
and i lose myself ...

i watch the sunset and its colors so wild
and i lose myself ...

i watch the cat nurse its kitten mild
and i lose myself ...

thank God i can lose myself,
lose myself in all he has made ...

thank God i can lose myself
and remember that day i prayed ...

God, let me lose myself
lose myself to your way.

Three Funerals

By Judith Caswell

"Some glad morning when this life is o'er, I'll fly away, To a home on God's celestial shore, I'll fly away." St. Mary's Baptist Church pulsated to the vigorous voices and the cadenced hand clapping of the congregation. Everyone celebrated Brother Watson's entry into heaven.

As I wondered why I preferred funerals in black churches, I recalled the procedure at North Star and St. Mary's Baptist, the two black churches where I had attended three funerals.

Everyone attending enters the church and sits down. Customarily, those who arrive five or ten minutes before the service line up behind the family in front of the church and march down the aisle with the family when the music begins. Usually the entire church congregation is voluntarily present, and they sing "Just Over Gloryland" or another hand-clapping, foot-stomping, jubilant gospel hymn.

When I marched into St. Mary's after the family, I was shocked at first to see neon lights emblazoned on the paneled walls at the front of the church declaring, "one Lord, one faith, one baptism." Later in the service, I thought of the shining star of Bethlehem and realized that Jesus Christ would be pleased with these glowing neon words, these beacons of faith.

Directly behind the pulpit at St. Mary's stands the baptistry adorned with a painting of John the Baptist with his hand raised over Jesus' head. In white churches, paintings of Jesus often depict a short, fragile, lily-white man, an image of Jesus diametrically opposed to the vision my preacher, Dr. David Dykes at Green Acres Baptist, described in one of his sermons. Tall, muscular and darkly tanned, this bearded Jesus looked genuinely Jewish; so did John.

For the funeral at St. Mary's, Don, the

son of the deceased, read his father's favorite scripture from Isaiah 50:6-10. Verse 10 states, "Who among you fears the Lord and obeys the word of his servant? Let him who walks in the dark, who has no light, trust in the name of the Lord and rely on his God." Sharing a personal note, Don said, "My father often asked me to read aloud to him from the Bible, and he usually wanted me to read from the book of Isaiah." Seldom does a member of the family read the scripture or speak at a white funeral.

Next, the secretaries of the churches at North Star and St. Mary's read the resolutions detailing every office in the church the deceased had held such as superintendent of the Sunday School or president of the Women's Missionary Union. After the secretary's recitation came the remarks by members of the congregation who walked to a microphone and told personal accounts of the way this individual touched and influenced lives for the Lord. These moving and spontaneous expressions enable a person to express the beauty of another's life and to experience a healing catharsis. A typical remark might be, "Sister Tilley faithfully attended this church; when there was a death in the family, she brought food and ministered to the family." However, at the St. Mary's funeral, the preacher said, "The family has requested that there be no remarks. If you have something to give the family that you have written, there will be people standing at the exits to receive these tributes as you leave. After all, we should have spoken to Brother Watson and told him how much he meant to us while he was living."

At St. Mary's the preacher chanted his message in a half singing, poetic voice proclaiming, "There is one thing that is certain in this world; that is uncertainty. We are uncertain if we will get up in the morning, if we will still have our jobs

tomorrow, if we will eat breakfast the day after tomorrow. But in this world of uncertainty death is certain. Death is certain for all people, no matter how rich or how poor they are." After the preacher declared these sentences in a deep, measured and rhythmic voice, the congregation agreed with "Amen, that's right brother. You said it. That's true."

Unlike the white funerals I have attended in which no one said a word except for the preacher, in the black funeral the congregation enthusiastically encouraged the minister with positive reinforcing comments on his message. In his sonorous, metrical voice the preacher intoned, "Yes, death is the only certainty in an uncertain world, but we are certain that, as Job said, 'Our redeemer liveth' and He has prepared a place for us to live eternally with Him! 'The congregation thundered,' Praise the Lord! Amen!"

As I listened to the minister's cadences and the audience's responses, I remembered from my study of the spiritual in American literature that James Weldon Johnson, the black professor and song writer who wrote the black national anthem, "Lift Every Voice and Sing," said this method was the way spirituals started. A song leader with a gift of melody, a talent for poetry and a strong voice would stand and create a song based on a scripture passage. As he repeated the chorus and improvised the stanzas of the song, the congregation would join in, gradually beginning to pick up the refrain, clapping its hands to an African rhythm and joyously praising God. The accuracy of the scripture references was phenomenal because in many Southern states before the Civil War, teaching a slave to read and write was illegal. The song leader or bard was recalling scripture from memory; yet a spiritual like "Oh, What a Beautiful City" accurately describes the New Jerusalem or heaven in the book of Revelation.

In 1861 a missionary at Fortress Monroe, Virginia, sent the first copied spiritual, "Go Down, Moses," to New York City to be published. This spiritual compares the plight of the Israelites in

Egypt to the slavery of the black man in the South. I often hear the refrain of that song "Let my people go" in the speech of my black friends Joy Watson and Shirley Bishop, for they both often use the phrase "let me go" in conversation. As an English instructor, I once read an essay about a black student's mother which stressed she never complained about her hard times, the student used a phrase from the spiritual "They Crucified My Lord." Referring to her mother, the student employed the phrase, "She never said a mumbling word," a line in the spiritual which describes Jesus's endurance of suffering on the cross.

At St. Mary's after the preacher's sermon, he announced, "Will the flower bearers please come forward." Several women all over the congregation rose and picked up a plant or a wreath of flowers and took it to the front of the church to place in the limousine that was going to the cemetery. The sight of a 60-year-old black woman wearing a yellow dress, pill box hat and high-heeled shoes cheerfully carrying a green plant was touching, as well as consoling. Gazing at the colorful, life-affirming woman and plant, I felt a warmth of soul, an airy exuberance.

As everyone followed the flower bearers out of the church, they clapped as a soloist sang "I'll Fly Away." Every time I think about this funeral, I clearly see a strong Jewish Jesus, a glowing sign announcing, "one Lord, one faith, one baptism," a joyous woman carrying a green plant and I hear "Just a few more weary days and then, I'll fly away. To a land where joys shall never end, I'll fly away. I'll fly away, oh, glory, I'll fly away. When I die, hallelujah, by and by, I'll fly away." Then I smile and rise and step lightly and ethereally into the sunshine, lift my head to God's blue sky and shout, "Amen!"

Sacred Flame

By Lori North

Oh, would that I were wood,
And you the flame!
Your fire would leap forth from my depths.
The people would gather 'round us.
They would see the glow emanating from us.
They would be warmed by our heat
But in reverence they would never dare touch us.
You would burn me and consume me,
And I would be content,
Knowing that you drew life from me
And ours would be the fire that never fades,
And ours will be the love
That never dies.



Tree of Life by Franklin Gandy

randmother Morrow

By Amy Wright

There's my Grandmother.
Did you meet her?
What's that you say?
Oh, my. Yes, Sir!
She's quite a special lady!
Well, she was born in 1910,
The fifth day of June.
She can tell you lots about way back when.
Mostly, she's content
To live each day however it should begin.

She's loving and caring
To all who are around.
If you have a mind to quietly listen,
She can give advice that is good and sound.

Family reunions on
Thanksgiving Day
Are not such hard work,
But rather giggling and play.
With many grandchildren and more great-great,
We had better not worry her
By coming or going too late.

She's short and spunky.
She likes to stay up late.
She's in charge of the dishes and keeps up
With each piece of silver, glassware and plate.

Though her eyesight is quite dim,
Her goal is one poem for each of her grandchildren.
She is loving, caring and sharing.
Family's so important—it makes her grin.
Though she can't give a lot,
Each gift is so special since it comes from her heart.
We all love to be with her
and it's sad when we have to part.



Heron by Karin Miller



Flowers by Eric Ballard

To Grow ... In Love

By Jody Kreckel

For a flower to sustain its beauty,
It must periodically be watered, fed,
trimmed, given more ground and mostly
nurtured through sunlight ... given the chance
to grow.

Despite the hardships, they endure,
Season upon season, from the earliest frost.
to the deep cold of winter's days.

They rise,
Richer in beauty, stronger from the roots,
to the tip of their stems,
Revealing majestic majesty
To bud for one more day.

In love, we, too, must go through our seasons,
energetic many a day, yet tired the next,
The road is narrow and long, the
vibrance of youth ever present,
yet sometimes miles away.

It is only through time that one
can see how precious and fragile one's
existence can be.

Only with you has it ever been complete.
Only with you can I grow ...

In love ...
We grow ...
Together!

The Thirteen Steps

By Pearl Sherman

I'm standing at the top of thirteen steps in front of a large granite building where I've stood so many nights before. It's dark, but there is just enough light for him to see her emerge from between this building and the one next door. She has on a white dress that seems to illuminate her as she moves swiftly toward me. Just as she glides directly in front of the steps where I'm standing, she glances quickly over her shoulder. As her face turns toward me, I can see the raw terror there. I looked to see what could cause such naked fright and a second woman comes into sight who looks exactly like the one fleeing.

Completely shocked, I stepped further back into the shadows of the columns of the building. The second woman turned just as the first one did, except her glance seemed to stop and stare straight at me instead of looking back over her shoulder. She is *dressed* exactly like the first woman and their hair shone in the meager light as though it was silver. I trembled in fear as her glance seemed to freeze me to the spot where I stood. If I could, I would have fled. Her eyes seemed to see right through me but as I got myself under control, she appeared to float down the street in pursuit of the first woman. As the last of the silver hair and white dress floated out of sight, I collapsed against the large column and closed my eyes with relief.

I could see the image of the women burned into my vision and my eyes flew open as I remembered seeing the flash of a knife in the right hand of the second woman. I must do something, for I can sense the danger. Every nerve in my body tells me something *terrible* is going to happen and I feel that my next move could prevent it. But what should my next move be? I could find a phone and call ... call whom, the police? "Hello, officer, I saw two women who looked exactly alike floating down the street in

the dark. One was frightened and the other had a weapon in her hand."

Before I could think, I skipped down the steps, counting them as I always did, and started running down the street in the direction the two women had gone. As I passed the streets on either side, I looked for them. After five minutes I was breathless and slowed to a fast walk. I thought how strange I had not seen a car or a person on any of the streets. Just then, I saw a flash of white out of the corner of my eye. I turned swiftly, in time to see one of the women, knife raised, as the other turned to face her attacker, both hands raised to ward her off.

There was a horrendous crash somewhere overhead. I woke, sitting straight up in bed, soaked to the skin. My nightgown twisted and clinging to my body. I was trembling as the crash of thunder awakened me from the nightmare. I got up, put fresh sheets on the bed and jumped into the shower. I wrapped a towel around me, tied my hair up, then went downstairs to make a pot of coffee. Now the storm was in full force. The lightning was flashing every few seconds. I could hear the rain lashing against the window panes as the wind whipped fiercely around the house.

As I waited for coffee, I thought about the recurring nightmare. I had to get to the bottom of this once and for all. First, I had to remember when it first occurred. I glanced at the clock. It was 5 a.m., Saturday. At least I didn't have to go to work today.

I fixed a cup of coffee, closed my eyes and saw the women of my dreams. Something was trying to jog my memory as I recalled their faces. I went upstairs to the bathroom and looked in the mirror. Of course! My face was the face in the nightmare, but why? Why were there two of me? Mother! I'd call mother as soon as I thought she was awake. No, I'd get dressed, drive the hour to her apartment in the city. Perhaps talking it out with her would help me sort through this mess. I had never

told her the whole nightmare.

I tried not to think about it as I drove. I soon realized I could think of nothing else. I know now the dreams had started almost a year ago, which meant I was 18 when they started. Dad had died of a heart attack three years before when I was 15. Funny, but parts of my life seemed a little fuzzy from 13 to 18. I could hardly remember some of those years.

It was 7:30 a.m. when I parked in front of mother's apartment building. I rang her bell and after a few minutes heard her sleepy growl, "Who is it?" "It's me, Mother, Edith." She buzzed me in. I stepped in the elevator and pushed 5. Mother was waiting at the door. She looked at me a second, then held out her arms. As she pulled me inside, she said, "You've been having the nightmare again. Sit down. It's time I told you some things that might help." We talked for hours and I realized why some years of my life were blank.

Around my 10th birthday, I found out I had a twin sister. When we were three years old, my parents admitted there was something wrong with Endor. After years of doctors, therapy and travel all over the world to try to find help for her, my parents were broke. Finally, broken-hearted and defeated, they put her in an asylum.

A few weeks before our 10th birthday, my parents started telling me about my twin sister who looked exactly like me, who was coming home to us. I was excited and looking forward to having a playmate. Imagine! I was going to have a playmate who looked exactly like me.

The day finally came when we went to this large building with 13 steps and huge columns. The day was cold and blustery. Just as we got there the rain started and the early evening turned as dark as night. Mother and I sat in the waiting room while Dad talked to the doctors. I wandered out to the top of the steps of the building. Finally, Mother and Dad came out just as a nurse came from between the two buildings along with a pretty 10 year-old girl and two suitcases.

We stared at each other and Mother said she spent the next three years keeping us apart. Endor

hated me on sight. I tried everything to get her to like me, Mother told me, but she would stare hatefully at him when she wasn't pinching, kicking or hitting me.

At last, when we turned 13, Mother came out to the garage to find Endor standing over me with a knife. Mother picked up the axe without thinking. She swung it, hitting Endor on the neck with the blade. Endor's head rolled over to me with her silver hair all mixed with blood.

I had a nervous breakdown, Mother said, and they admitted me to Winterhaven Sanitarium, where I stayed until I was 15. Mother and Dad came to bring me home from the sanitarium and we all returned to the big white two-story house out in the country where I now live. Mother said Endor was buried in the little family cemetery just behind the back gate.

It was late afternoon when I left the city and drove slowly toward home. When Mother started telling me about Endor, my memory started to come back. I remember Dad coming to see me at the sanitarium to tell me the doctors thought I was well enough to come home. Being lucid enough to tell him the truth that day, I said, 'Dad, I'm not Edith, I'm Endor. Mother killed Edith. Edith had tired of me mistreating her.' Dad stared at me. I could see astonishment and disbelief on his face, but I knew he believed me. He and Mother brought me home a week later and when Dad got me alone, he made me promise not to tell Mother. Dad died a month after I came home. Mother stayed until I was 18, then moved to the city.

It was all clear now—the nightmares, Edith and everything was painfully clear. I am Endor! Endor was the witch whom King Saul visited in the Bible to ask if he would win his battles! Yes, I smiled to myself. Endor lives again after many centuries.

Salem 1692

By Linda Honeycutt

As I ran through the trees in terror,
my life flashed before my eyes.
My legs were weak and shaky
under the darkness of the skies.

The big yellow moon was hidden,
under a mass of angry clouds.
I heard the barking of the hounds
and the roaring of the crowds.

I stopped to catch my breath
under the oak because—
I ran for my life and pride,
for a witch they thought I was.

I had done no wrong to gain this,
suspicion would kill me.
I slumped beside an old pine
and then embraced the tree.

As the dog grew nearer and louder,
I tried to limp away.
There was no use in talking,
they ignored all I had to say.

The fate of many young girls,
flaming death upon a stake.
When would my nightmare finally end
or would I ever wake?

I went on for another hour,
'til I could go no more.
I woke in a patch of green moss,
then I heard the people roar.

They descended on me like creatures
from a place no better than hell.
How long I had to live now,
I could no longer tell.

They cursed me and spat on me
and told me I would die.
A lady screamed "Witch!" at me,
and I knew it was no lie.

I was tied to a stake, surrounded by leaves
and a mocking prayer was said.
Now I sit here many years later,
for I am no longer dead.



Recondite by Jesse Jones

The Protector

By Rebecca Wellborn

My simplicity can be deceiving.
I have strong defenses,
that protect you day by day.
Yet,
my delicate nature can sometimes
crack under pressure.

I see everything you see,
Through the rain,
the thunder,
the hail.
Even angelic visions,
from dawn till dusk.

I am your protector.
To touch me,
I feel smooth.
Look at me,
I am invisible.

I was brought into this world
to preserve mankind.
To keep you safe
from the hazardous journeys
that lie ahead.

To know that you are secure
compels me to reason
that my job is done.
Even though everyday,
I go unnoticed.

Next time you pass me by,
you will think of me differently.
For my existence,
is your prosperity.

For I am
THE WINDOW.



Old Time Barn by Jennifer Pecquet

Yesterday, Today and Forever

By Judy Rhodes

As I wander
through the ages
The desert slows
my pace
My presence
like a shadow ghost
Lost in time
and space

This ancient world
grows larger
In the chill
of midnight air
The silence
covers up my thoughts
As if I
wasn't there

I haven't
ever mastered
The fear
of being small
Yet in the dark
and quiet world
I must
accept it all

I humbly offer
what I feel
And never
knew before
As by the grace
of God I am
Drawn to the
desert's core.

Barefoot

By Tina Tallant

How I wish I could peer through the eyes
of those who have gone before me.
To walk this earth in barefoot peace.
To see the sun, the moon,
the stars in the sky the way they did,
awesome and unobstructed by the white man's way of life.
To worship my God beneath each
with their simplistic understanding,
as surely was his plan.
To walk behind the great hunter
and feel his unyielding prowess. To see his love of life,
his soul as free as the eagle.
To experience his masterful touch,
to see him in the faces of our children.
Still I must walk with the white man,
for he is my brother also, and masquerade in his world
for it is the only one left.

The Many Shades of Hell

By Bill H. Savage

Hell comes in many shadings, many colors, different textures. Time of day or night changes nothing in the perception of hell.

The parking lot around the buff-colored concrete building is examined by a stationary television camera, so it is difficult to approach the darkened doorway without being seen. That was the idea for the business owned by a shady conglomerate headquartered in the downtown part of the city.

I came to my senses one night about three in the morning at this place I call Hell. The rooms are mostly lit through the rain-smeared, greasy-filtered window glass by the flickering neon lights—red neon—from the skewed, wind-yawed sign that says “Nude Models.” A whore house, of course. They go by different names and are ubiquitous. Every city of every size tolerates one or more and every police department knows where they are and who owns them and what happens there.

They sit in the living room, a dreary place of ripped upholstery and dim yellowed lights and carpet no longer with any pile on the path from the door to the hall. The creaking in the outer hall alerts the four emaciated women and the intenseness comes alive as they wait in dread for the distant mechanical sound of the security guard’s voice on the tiny speaker announcing, “Customer coming in.”

When he stands inside the door, they fasten smiles on their mouths although their eyes remain dead, cold, humorless, fearful. Eyes adjusting to the dimness, he goes from one to another, then points toward one who rises, smile still etched on a white mask. The thin gown hangs from her shoulders and falls to midcalf without support by either flesh or bone. Her hair, blonde and straight, lies lifeless on her shoulders. Her cheek bones show through

translucent skin darkened by a coat of flesh-colored powder. Her eyes, sunken, reflect both loss of hope and the prospect of earning something tonight so she eats tomorrow. But the question remains, at what cost?

The faceless man chooses a room down the hall where small lights glow over each door, a hall which echoes their footsteps and the groaning of bedspring inside doorways whose lights have been extinguished.

The loosening of one drawstring and she lies bare on the stained sheets of the single bed. The other furnishings are bleak: one chair, a small settee stained in vivid patterns visible even in the near darkness, a bedside table supporting a tilting 15-watt once-brass-plated light, a single picture of a lonely yellow sunflower and two hooks mounted into the wall which had once been papered. The sunflower is more than decoration; it conceals another video camera, monitored from the security officer’s cubicle, maybe from the manager’s office.

She turns her face as she waits and the terror of the forthcoming abasement is abated only by the thought that at her place—although not much better than this—a rig filled with white powder waits for her if she survives the small hours, a rig which takes the humiliation and degradation from her mind for a few hours, makes her whole for those few hours, gives her the strength to sleep the sleep of the damned, prepares her for ... She shoves those thoughts from her mind as the springs sag with his weight. Strange hands push and pull at her, strange fingers pry and pinch, a strange voice demands, strange teeth bite at her.

She hates the owner and she hates the watchman although she knows that both watch her and the others in their humiliating experiences and tonight isn’t either the first or last time. She once wondered what drove anyone to pleasure at the expense of such degradation and pain. But there is

the money. She has given up on the hype she once held so dear between herself and a wish for death, the lying to herself that she would move on with a stash. The Big H helped smother the pain. Then it takes her and holds her and now she knows there is no longer hope except for brief moments of mental vacuum when the pain disappears—no, is masked and covered but not buried.

Shuffling footsteps. The blessed knock—the only true pleasure in the act—and the guard's guttural voice, "It's over, sir. Time's up." She shoves him away and rolls out over the dampness, shrug-

ging her gown over her head and stabbing her feet into the sandals before she moves away from the man, leaving him to himself. Trembling, almost running, she slams and latches the door to the women's dressing room and sponges herself, sponges off the sweat and the sickening sweet odor of sex, wishing she held a piece of sand paper rather than the soft damp sponge. She collapses on the couch, gasping, wishing.

The sound of the speaker breaks through her reverie, "Customer on the way in."



Cry For Help

By Denesa Reece

I walked home from school one day to find my mother resting on her bedside. Her face was beaten so full of fright. Afraid of more to come later that night.

Her limp sobs filled the night air as I watched her limp body just lying there. I wanted to help her, but I didn't know what to do. I had to get back at him before he hurt me, too.

I took the gun from off the shelf, hoping for one bullet or one shot left.

The sudden rattle, the slam of the door, I pulled the trigger, he fell to the floor.

I told my mother as they hauled me in. "I Love You, Mom, and don't worry. He can't hurt you ever again!"

Gathering Woman's Harvest Song

By Judy Rhodes

Watch me gather
 with my basket
 listen to me sing
Let me show you
 how I work
 tell you everything

I am working
 with my hands
 dancing with my feet
Gathering
 a harvest feast
 while you hunt for meat

Life and herb
 let me not disturb
Fruit and seed
 both I really need
Sage and thyme
 these I know to rhyme
Root and bark
 hiding in the dark

See and smell
 if the world is well
Loud and strong
 joyful harvest song
Sprout and grow
 from the earth below
Rain and love
 from the sky above.

Calling Home

By Bill H. Savage

"When are you coming home?"

"I haven't been able to set a time, Mom. They're keeping me pretty busy, now."

"I know you must be busy, but it's been so long, so long since ..." Her voice trailed off into the clicks and static. He knew the fiber optics hadn't been improved so much that their voices were as authentic as the television ads said they'd be. No falling pins could be heard, although he heard someone yelling at somebody in the visitor's area.

"Mom, I call you every week."

"Yes, but that's not the same, not the same at all."

"I know, Mom. Would you rather I not call? Would that make it easier for you?"

"Don't be smart. I like to hear your voice, son, but seeing you at least once in a while is more of a temptation than satisfaction. I guess that'd be a way to put it."

"I know, I know. I'll work it out. Just give me time." He hated that word. Time—there was plenty.

"Why do you only call on Tuesdays? And only for ten minutes? Ten minutes, then it's all over. Why?"

"Just the way it is, Mom. Best time for me. We talked about it when ..."

"And recently, it's been collect. You used to call me, and come to visit. At least when you wanted to borrow money, but ... there's not even that any more."

"I just can't. Please understand. I can't. Is it the money for the calls that's bothering you? I can ..."

"You don't mention Janet either, ever. Why don't you talk about her or let me talk to her? Isn't she there?"

"Mom, my time's up. I'll have to go. I'll call next week if you want me to. But you don't ..."

"You want me to come to the city, to see you

and Janet? I can do it. My doctor'll say it's risky, I suppose, but he'll let me"

"Oh, Mom, don't do anything unless we talk. I'll call. 'Bye.'" The line went dead.

It was getting harder and harder to talk to her comfortably. She was becoming more interrogatory, demanding. He wished it hadn't happened like it did but he knew history wouldn't change because of wishes. It crossed his mind, again, maybe for the fiftieth time, "Maybe she'll never know, maybe she'll die before" But he knew that she'd likely be around a while.

Then it came on to him again, that old nightmare, now no longer a nightmare since it flooded his mind in the daylight, at odd times. Snatches of things from the past, bits and pieces as if there was a jigsaw puzzle which he hadn't all the pieces to, Janet's last conversation with him, when she came at him in her drunken rage, what Hal had said over the phone, the cops when they got to the house.

Yes, Janet'd gotten the best of him that time, and the other times as well. He's hated each one incident, and they came more frequently. Where they had been maybe only once a month, they came on at least once week. And the demands were increasing not only in frequency, but in intensity. And his mother, getting harder and harder to handle, not wanting to understand and his inability to tell her anything. Lucky she hadn't seen or recognized anything in the paper about Janet, Hal, himself.

That, in itself, was rather remarkable he thought, since his mother's habit was to read the paper, every day, from cover to cover. Other than her interest in gossiping with the girls, it was the most important thing in her life, maybe even more important to her than he was. But now, she was about all that was left to him, and each week he felt the compulsion to hear her

voice, to know that she was there. That something familiar was somewhere.

He had, on more than one occasion, acknowledged that he'd mislead Janet when he'd led her to believe that he was flush, rich, cool, bitchin. Driving that Caddy had been the clincher, and it had cost him a bundle. It had been the only way he could compete with her damn boyfriend, Hal, and both he and Janet knew that it was the only thing he had going for him. But he had been determined to get her even if it meant going into heavy debt with old Shy and his crowd. It was just that he hadn't figured that Shy wouldn't be a pushover. Old Shy, so small, so weak. Damn crook wanted 20 percent a week ... if you could believe it. His job, just pulling down 10 dollars an hour, figure 20 thou a year. And him driving a Caddy and sending Janet flowers and champagne every couple of days, wheeling and dealing. And he was going to be a hero on a white charger, saving her from what the old movies called "a fate worse than death." A one night stand with her, her looking like teenager out on her first date. Acted just like it was her first time, acting coy, coquettish, shy. She had him going.

What a sucker he had been, when she looked up at him and asked him if he could lend her a few bucks, just to tide her over until the first. A week or so later she said that she needed something to pay the tuition at the university where she was going to school, and he fell for that like a ton of bricks. That's when he went to Shy and negotiated a loan of a couple of big ones, figuring he's hit his mother up to cover him. That's when he discovered that she, his mother, either didn't have the money or, if she did, she wasn't ready to relinquish it to him. But she let him down pretty easy, promising that she could get into some of the money his father had left in his will, \$10,000 each six months, and the next six month check was due within a month. He's told her that it was for some debts he'd incurred getting his business up and running,

which pleased her that he would share his business interests with her.

By the time she had gotten the semiannual check, though, the 20 percent per week had raised what he owed Shy to about \$3,000, and he'd told his mother that he needed only two, so he had to work her for a little more. To make matters worse, Janet's demands increased, and she threatened to go back to Hal if he didn't come up with some more money. When he let the Caddy go back to the rental company, the stuff hit the fan with Janet. She told him she was accustomed to making two to five hundred a night, working for Hal, and she wasn't interested in staying with him if he was poverty stricken. The exact words she'd used: poverty stricken.

"How about school, Janet?" he'd asked, in astonishment at her statement.

"Yeah, I'm in school; going to graduate next year. But how do you figure I'd been making these awful payments to stay in school, buddy boy?" she had growled at him.

Appeared that Hal was more than her boyfriend. Seemed that he and she had been working the downtown hotel district, the outlying motels.

Then he asked her, "And what was it that you saw in me that got you interested in marrying me, Janet?"

"Money, legitimacy, a way to get out of the old way of life. And the vice squad was beginning to get too close to me and Hal. You seemed to be okay, maybe a little immature. You weren't half bad in bed, either. But if you don't have any money, the whole deal is off."

"Mother liked you, Janet. She thought you were pretty much all right. Doesn't that make any difference?" he had asked. And the way his voice cracked made him mad at her, himself and what he perceived to be his own whining.

"I can do without any reference to your mother, buddy boy. She was ... is ... nothing to me, and you ought to be the first to know it. I didn't marry you because of your mother, and now you want to throw her at me as if it mattered. Boy,

you're more immature than I ever dreamed possible." She paced the floor, looking out the window as if she were expecting someone at the door.

"Isn't there anything I can do to change the way this is going?" I asked.

"Yeah. Money. Get money."

"You know that things are looking up at the office, now. There's going to be a raise soon and then we can ..."

You've tried to dazzle me with more of that 'at-the-hokey-office' stuff, sonny boy, and it's never paid off. I'm not going to waste my youth, the prime of my life, with a stinking handful of flowers and a dinner at Perkins anymore. It just doesn't wash. Promises, promises and nothing to show for them." She had found a bottle hidden behind one of the

two chairs in the front room, and she didn't bother to use a glass.

"So what do you think you're going to do, Janet?"

"Going to get back with Hal. It won't be the same. Some of this legitimate lifestyle with you has been easier than being on the street or in the dating service, but I'll take some of the heat of the street life to go ahead with most of the good things in life."

"Then, we're done?"

"What else is there to say?" she said.

Never should have happened, I know, but that's when it went down. And Tuesday is the only night I can use the telephones.

Dusty the Hobo

By Pearl Sherman

Old Dusty was a lonely man, all he did was roam,
Hitching rides on railroad cars with no place to call home.

As he wandered to and fro throughout all the land;
With no family of his own, just a hobo band.

Then one cold, wet, stormy night, sheltered from the storm,
Came a mangy, dirty dog, trying to get warm.

The dog came slowly, sinking low, tired, afraid and meek.
Dusty fed him slowly; the dog was very weak.

Early the next morning as the sun came brightly up,
Dusty said, "I'll call you Rags. Why you are just a pup."

Now Dusty is never lonely; now he has a friend.
That night beside his campfire he found his next of kin.



Self Portrait by Karin Miller

Love Surpasses All Understanding

By Michelle Chanslor

Sit back and let me tell you a story
Of a lady much thought of with glory.
You see, some would say that she had a dull life
But quite the contrary, being a mother and a wife.
Her days were filled with much responsibility
Which took a load of physical and, of course, mental agility.
In her eyes, there was always something to be done
Not leaving much time for her own fun.
With a sense of urgency she accomplished her deeds
Always making time for her family's needs.
Never a soul did she neglect
For in return, she would only demand respect.
There were times when she may have been taken for granted
By loved ones who lost sight of just how their roots were planted.
Many a role she would play
Sometimes only to tire her at the end of her day.
Some may not understand why she would go to such great lengths
But you see, it is power of love that gives her these great strengths.

Buttcracker

By David Crawford

Buttcracker, fannypacker, labor is his pew.
Common worker, clock puncher, paying union dues.

Ratchet ratcher, skin scraper, turning down a screw,
Bucket washer, hose downer, working on a crew.

Nail whacker, hammer tacker, thumb a' turnin' blue,
wire winder, torch lighter, welding rods askew.

Roto rooter, crap shooter, plumb a pipe that spews,
Hunch backer, sewer doer, covered well in ooze.

Lotto gamer, sitcommer, bowling balls or cue,
Blueplater, lip smacker, burps a belch or two.

Buttcracker, fashion lacker, one squat'll do,
Tummy flapper, quarter mooner, spoiling all the view.

Reflection

By Allison Burrow

As I stare into a fountain,
A face appears in the water
And I begin to wonder
How does this face feel?

The face appears definite, sincere and happy.
My how pretty it is.
Nevertheless, my mind slowly changes
as my tears blur and distort this face.

How is it that this person feels so much pain and loneliness?
Why can't others see the beauty in her?
What can be wrong?
What can she do to change the way people see her?

I have so many questions concerning this lovely face,
And the face can't find an answer to any of them.
It looks so hopeless,
Almost willing to give up everything including its life.

It calls out to me
"Life just isn't worth living anymore!"
I pull away from the fountain and the reflection slowly fades
leaving a much calmer, glorious world behind.

Indian Summer

By Jay Akin

Fall days disrupted
Summer's dying breath intrudes
Is winter sleeping?

Magic Carpet Ride

By Karin Miller

People say that I have some very interesting friends. Some of them aren't even human! I once knew this iguana by the name of Peepers ... but that's another story. One of my truly unusual friends became a member of my family.

My sisters and I met him in the summer of '82 through a friend of a friend, and we practically adopted him on the spot. He was quite good-looking for his age, well-built, strong and stocky. He had a rich, classy personality that was almost in direct opposition to his outward appearance, like hearing a muscled, sun-bronzed construction worker recite Shakespeare.

We went to Kansas City that fall and introduced him to the joys of a renaissance festival—the arts, the theatre, the pageantry, the camping for months on end without electricity or running water—and he taught us a number of priceless lessons. I realize now that I wouldn't be who I am without him. He helped me learn how to be myself.

On the way down we began defensive driving lessons and worked on navigational skills. On the way home we started to learn about auto mechanics, something that never used to interest me in the slightest, the knowledge of which I now find invaluable.

Throughout the journey he quietly showed us how to handle emergencies with serenity and be reasonably comfortable in strange places and situations. During that trip and others, he showed us how to make the most of limited space under adverse conditions and do the best we could with what we had.

He was a great comfort in difficult times, whether we were waiting out a tornado warning or waiting for a check in the mail. He constantly reminded us that God would take care of us if we'd let him and he helped us feel safe and secure even when we were in precarious positions. Somehow he taught us to keep our sense of humor no matter what happened, which may be the most valuable lesson of all.

I don't know many people who have had the pleasure of having a friend like him. He gave me a unique sense of perspective on life that will no doubt benefit me as long as I live. But strangely enough, after all we've been through together—the incredible adventures and the unimaginable catastrophes—I don't even know his real name. You see, he doesn't speak English, and unfortunately I don't speak "School Bus."

A Marriage Proposal

By Bobby Martin

I look at you with love so true that I know no one can ever compare to you.
Your eyes are as green as an emerald gem. Now I know that even a diamond is dim.
Your skin is peach so soft and smooth; just like the sand where I first found you.
Your smile is bright just like today as the sun shines over the west coast bay.
Now I know that you are real. Please come with me now and let's make a lifelong deal.
Will you marry me?

On the Street Where I Live

By Catherine Starkey

It is human nature to recall the glory of the "good-old-days." Seventy years ago Red Hook, Brooklyn, was my whole world. I used to think vacation meant two months away from school, not carefree fun, sports and leisure at some distant resort. My summers were spent on Bush Street, across the way from John Ross' farm. They had pigs, horses and vegetables and a huge oak tree at the side of their farmhouse. Mrs. Ross smelled Ivory-soap clean. We still played potsy, jump-rope, cowboys and Indians then and girls had dolls and carriages and play tea sets.

When we moved away in 1939, I closed the window on my childhood and opened the door of adolescence in Windsor Terrace, but I never lost sight of Red Hook. After the war

ended, marriage followed and, even that long ago, people were moving to suburbia to bring up their children, just as we did with our five. Although my husband and I settled in New Jersey, many of our families remained around Brooklyn, which meant return visits for weddings, holidays, funerals, graduations and such. Each time I would ask family members to ride down to Bush Street, to no avail.

After more than 50 years, in 1993, I returned to Red Hook with Michael Kaufman, New York Times staff writer. Time, neglect and crime had been unkind to my corner of the world. Michael did not think the Ross oak tree was all that big. His eyes could not see the glory of the "good-old-days." But remember, I never lost sight of Red Hook—I saw it once again with my heart.



Home by Eric Ballard

2 = 1

By David Owen

A little old man bought a new house,
Or at least it was new to him.
He checked it out, from room to room,
As he was moving in.

The last place he went was the attic.
It was there he was taken by surprise.
Lying in a small case on the dusty floor,
He could not believe his eyes.

When he opened the case, there it was,
Staring right back at him.
Its strings were loose, it was out of tune,
But there lay an old violin.

For a moment, he just stood there,
Then he rosined the bow and tightened the strings.
Eventually he put it up on his chin,
And made the little old violin sing.

From that day forth when they performed,
Whether it be for others or just for fun,
Anyone could tell that it was done so very well,
Because the 2 of them became 1.

Silence

By Edna Hester

Once upon a time, birds sang , breezes whispered in my ear, a heartbeat, a child playing, dogs barking, cars honking. Music that was too loud, the crack of the bat, the roar of the crowd, the cheers of the people, all sounds to be heard. But now they are all silent.

The bird's song can no longer be heard, the breezes do not whisper in my ear, my heart is only a remembered sound, no longer can the children be heard. The dogs barking, cars honking their horns are only remembered sounds.

Once I took these sounds for granted. They were part of my world to be heard without listening to. Now the sounds are all gone. Oh, how I wish I listened to those sounds. Now they are heard only in my dreams, now my world is a world of silence, I only imagine those sounds that I heard long ago.

Once I lived in a world of sounds. Now I live in a world of silence.
I am deaf.

Of Course, I Like Geology

By Brenna Ravenhill

As we stepped out of the white school vans with some trepidation and gingerly hopped over the mucky patch of ground into the cold ill-smelling air, I realized this was precisely the place I wanted to explore avidly in my spare moments. Of what consequence was it that one might die of hepatitis, tuberculosis or AIDS by merely touching a wall, as long as one learned something of geology in the process! As I looked at the cold, gray, cement driveway and the building with stairs from which the ill-smelling aroma came wafting through the air, I instinctively understood the fanatic gleam in my teacher's eyes.

THE WOMAN WAS MAD. Teetering on the edge of insanity. On the verge of demise. On the cliff of reason about to keel head first into the enveloping abyss of lunacy. One tiny nudge, one breath of wind and she would topple into the dark and screaming chasms of chaos and confusion. The lady was MENTAL. How could she bring us here? The wind swept around us forebodingly. There before us loomed the Sewage Treatment Plant.

A lady named Karen, between snuffles and sneezes, cheerfully informed us that sewage employees are healthy individuals because they build up immunities. Somehow the knowledge that a woman who had been near sewage for six years had still managed to become sick, did not make me feel at ease, particularly as I have always been accustomed to Clorox-clean environments. After telling us they build immunities, implying there are many things to build immunities to, she gleefully made us climb the stairs and walk the plank. Or rather, the narrow area above the madly thrashing sewage. In vain we tried not to trip over each other or touch the

flimsy railing on either side of the pathway, while still trying to pay attention to our tour-guide and proper homage to the foaming-slosh madly churning underneath. From our precarious vantage point, we had an admirable view of the panorama. The Sewage Treatment Plant and all its thrills stretched before us.

Unfortunately we had to start writing. As we removed our protective arms from before our noses, we were all but knocked out by the stench. Of all the foul smelling things, ... the senses reeled, it set the mind spinning, we were on the verge of fainting, ... what was that smiling woman saying? "These are Archimedean screws, they act as elevators ..." Didn't she realize we were turning green? No doubt, this was the geology which so inspired our instructor.

With much reluctance our tour-guide tore herself away from the fascinating play of the brackish water and told us we could descend the steps. Choking and gasping we moved toward the steps, but had to wait while an exasperating nerd gave his last longing look around. Finally, gulping for air, we reached ground. True the air was still odorous but anything was preferable to what we had been subjected to. The tour-guide's incessant flow of information continued as we went past the splashing aeration chamber and the horrifying tank where sludge spewed forth from a pipe. The tour-guide nodded at it admiringly, affectionately, then hustled us toward the Clorox-chamber. By now most of us were petrified, not wanting to touch our clothes, pens or books, fearing we'd be struck dead if we did. We wanted to dip our hands in some HCL, and then take a pleasant bath in some other acid. Of course, we see how one can become addicted to geology. What's there not to understand?

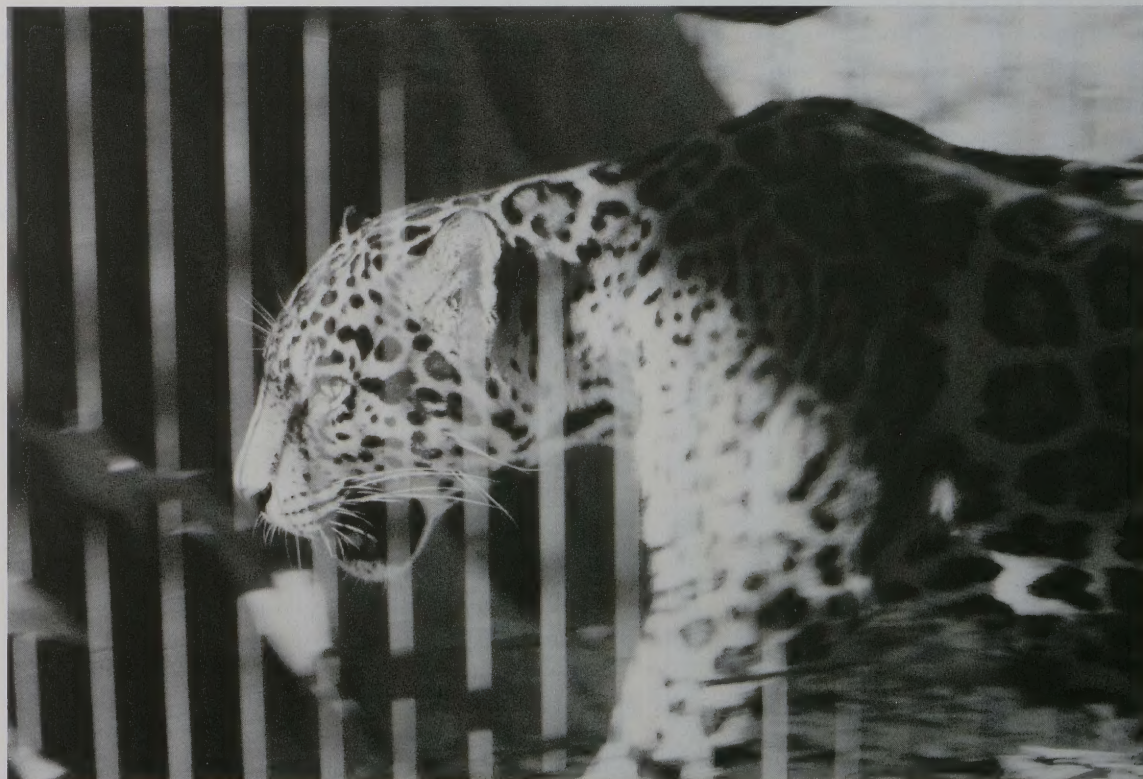
I Must Be Free

By Stephen Payne

When the emptiness of time has come unto me
and I can find no pleasures to enjoy
the shrill, sweet voice of madness whispers through me
I must be free, I must create, I must destroy.

When fear has cast its shadow on tomorrow
and tears have left a stain on days of late
I hear a voice that wells up through the sorrow
I must be free, I must destroy, I must create.

When pain is both my mother and my father
and loneliness my friend and enemy
I find no joy in one choice or another
I must create, I must destroy, I must be free.



Girls Just Wanna Have Fun by Karin S. Miller

Writer's Block Clarified

By Karin Miller

The other day a friend asked me to explain writer's block. I drew a total blank. I thought everyone knew what writer's block was! Now that I think about it, though, I guess it's probably not in the dictionary. (I looked—it isn't.)

I tend to think of it as a stream of consciousness problem. Either the stream has been blocked by debris or it has become one of those that meander—winding through a rocky forest floor with so many twists and turns that it no longer knows where it's going, where it is or how it got there.

Sometimes the stream becomes a mighty torrent overflowing its banks, completely overwhelming the writer. Sometimes the stream dries up altogether.

When writer's block happens to me, I find that trying to fight it usually makes it worse. What I usually do is give up—temporarily, of course. The moment I go to the refrigerator I will invariably be struck by an incredible inspiration. Then I'll be able to sit back down and pour water from my little sparkling stream of consciousness onto the paper.

Course, it's not always quite that easy. Sometimes I'll sit down only to find that my train of thought has completely derailed. Now, when I start mixing metaphors, I know it's time for a serious break!

So I wrote this little poem for my friend to describe how writer's block feels:

I have
been
staring
mindlessly
at this blank
page for several hours now;
can't think of
anything
worth
saying
Sorry.

